

My Kingdom is not of this World Steven Lloyd

I would summarize the Story of the Bible in this way: it opens with God as the King of the universe. He establishes a special relationship with the nation of Israel. This special nation eventually rejects God from being King and asks for a man to rule over them in order to be like the nations around them (1 Sam. 8). God gives them a king. He gives them many kings, and the kings end up becoming the problem. Even the best of them are flawed. The books of 1 & 2 Kings tell that sordid story, but the prophets announce that God will rule as King once again. This is what Israel longed for during their years of exile.

When Jesus came on the scene, He seemed to be the likely candidate—the one who would deliver them from their oppressors and create a sovereign nation. The Gospel accounts support their expectations, but the disciples of our Lord were thrown for a loop because the kingdom God established was not the kingdom they expected. When Jesus stood before Pilate, he said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world” (John 18:36). Twice, Jesus emphasizes the point that His kingdom is not of this world.

This is not to say that the kingdom had nothing to do with the world. John makes the striking statement, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). When Jesus says that His kingdom is not of this world, He is saying that the source or origin of His kingdom are not of this world. The disciples were right about Jesus. He was the One through whom God would rule. He was seated on David’s throne when He ascended and was exalted to sit at His Father’s right hand. This is one of the main points of Peter’s sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:22-36).

The supernatural activity that accompanied Jesus’ ministry is another indicator that His kingdom was not of this world. When Nicodemus approached Jesus by night, he said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (Jn. 3:2). We often think of the signs Jesus performed as evidence that He was God in the flesh, and that is fine (Jn 20:30, 31), but it is evidence of more, in particular, of the otherworldly nature of the kingdom. One of the many supernatural activities of our Lord was casting out demons. On one occasion, He was accused of having done so by the prince of demons. After reasoning with His accusers, Jesus informed them, “If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Lk. 11:20). Jesus’ power over the demonic world was evidence that the kingdom is come.

Jesus implied the same thing when disciples of John came asking if He was the one to come or whether they should look for another. Jesus said,

Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me. (Matt. 11:4-6)

This echoes what Isaiah wrote in 35:5-6 and 61:1. Anyone familiar with Isaiah would have recognized Jesus’ response as a prophetic indicator concerning the kingdom.

There are other aspects of Jesus’ kingdom that distinguish it as otherworldly, but one final aspect is its permanence. Kingdoms of men come and go. They have been removed, or “shaken” (Hag. 2:6, 21). We have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:27). It cannot be shaken precisely because it is not of this world.